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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001019

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/05/2024
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CONATEL THREATENS TO SEIZE RADIO STATION
EQUIPMENT, DISABLES ANTENNAE

REF: CARACAS 1013 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: A/POLITICAL COUNSELOR DARNALL STEUART,
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) On July 31, Minister of Public Works and Housing, Diosdado Cabello, named Puerto La Cruz-based radio station Orbita Radio 107.5 as one of 34 radio and television stations to be closed by the media regulatory agency Conatel. Following weekend shutdowns of numerous stations across Venezuela (reftel), the station continued to broadcast for an additional 24 hours before finally being shuttered. On August 3 a group of people who claimed they were from Conatel (but refused to provide identification to station personnel) arrived unannounced at the headquarters of Orbita Radio and told managers they would have to cease transmissions. Station executives questioned the legality of the order and decided to continue to broadcast, arguing they had never received official written notification to leave the airwaves. On August 4, despite demonstrations against the closure by members of the National Press Association, NGO representatives, and students, members of the National Guard arrived at the station's headquarters and ordered it to cease broadcasting. Government officials who accompanied the National Guard also threatened to confiscate the station's broadcast equipment. At 6:50PM, August 4, the station ended its last broadcast by playing the national anthem. Midway through the final broadcast, however, Conatel representatives reportedly cut the signal from the antennae, preventing the final seconds of the station's last broadcast. Station employees departed the building without further incident.

12. (C) Comment: Despite demonstrations in Puerto La Cruz on August 4 by members of the National Press Association, NGOs, civil society representatives, and students, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) demonstrated its determination to enforce the closure of the 34 stations. While Venezuelan Radio Chamber General Director Jesus Sarco told PAS officer that Conatel has not yet actually taken the equipment from the building, the threat of equipment seizure, coupled with swift action by the National Guard, clearly demonstrate the government's resolve to enforce its orders. End Comment.

DUDDY